



## **DRY CREEK-LOKOYA VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT**

**5900 DRY CREEK ROAD, NAPA, CA 94558**

(707) 944-1562

A 501(c)3 Non-Profit Corporation Tax ID #68-0383597

[www.drycreek-lokoya.com](http://www.drycreek-lokoya.com)

### **CHIEF 16's CORNER**

#### **An Open Letter To My Neighbors**

This past October, beginning October 8, 2017, was a tragic event for everyone in the Napa and Sonoma Valleys. Here at home, in the hills of the Dry Creek-Lokoya Volunteer Fire Company (DCL), it was all hands on deck to try and stop an unstoppable fire. We have never seen 70 mph winds in the valley.

Many neighbors have asked me, "Where was the Dry Creek-Lokoya Volunteer Fire Company to help save my house or help me evacuate. Valid questions especially coming from such tragic events.

The Dry Creek-Lokoya Volunteer Fire Company is part of Napa County Fire Department (NCFD) and we are Station 16. As such, our fire engines are owned by Napa County Fire and we are dispatched by NCFD. On Sunday, October 8, E216 was staffed and sent to the Atlas Fire. The DCL crew on board assisted with evacuations until E216 broke down some time Monday or Tuesday and was sent to the shop for repairs.

Dry Creek-Lokoya Assistant Chief Madison was on board E213 also on the Atlas Fire and, thus, not available for our area.

I was on board P16 with another firefighter and was sent to the Partrick Fire until late Tuesday evening. We assisted on Partrick Rd., Dealy Ln., Haire Ln., and Hwy 121/12. We were then sent to the top of Redwood Rd. where E213 and P16 saved the Archer Taylor Preserve house and two houses on the Kubler property. Unfortunately, we were not able to save the Kubler barn. We were trapped at the top of Redwood Rd. by fire below us and were eventually able to leave late Wednesday evening. It was only then, late Wednesday evening, that I was able to return to the Dry Creek-Lokoya area to see what I could do in our area to work on saving my neighbors' homes. I first went up to upper Dry Creek Rd. and Wall Rd. where I had to cut up and remove the trees that had fallen across the road. It was obvious that the fire had already blown through upper Dry Creek and Wall Rd. as I found many homes lost. There were no fire resources on upper Dry Creek or Wall Rd. I then went up Mt. Veeder Rd. to see what I could work on but the fire had also blown through Mt. Veeder with more homes lost. Again, there were no fire resources except me in P16. I finally went back to lower Dry Creek where the fire had not crossed the road but was heading down Mt. Veeder towards the houses on lower Dry Creek. All this time I had been requesting fire resources but was constantly turned down and was told there were no resources available.

The fire first reached three houses in the 5600 block of Dry Creek. I asked for re sources over the radio. I was told again to call the branch director. I had to go back to my residence where I still had cell service

## **An Open Letter To My Neighbors**

**(continued)**

to make the call and was told again that there were no fire resources available. It was only then that two Lake County engines responded to my radio request along with the task force leader and four, CalFire employees in a utility truck. With those two engines and P16 we were able to save four houses but lost one across Dry Creek.

The CalFire employees pointed out to dispatch that if the fire jumped Dry Creek, it would next heads towards the Vet's Home. This brought a phone call from the Napa County Fire Chief, Barry Biermann, telling me that come Friday morning I would have all the resources I needed to keep the fire from jumping Dry Creek Rd. It was only then that we had enough resources in our area to do any work. Fortunately (unfortunately for the owners) we lost only two more houses on lower Dry Creek Rd.

Question is, why tell this story? I want my neighbors to understand how we were dispatched and why we were not, initially, in the Dry Creek-Lokoya response area and what we did accomplish. Also, it is the job of the Napa County Sheriff's Department to evacuate homes when threatened and not the fire company. We could not be everywhere. The larger question to ask is where were the available engines that could have come to our area? When the Nuns Fire reached Lokoya Rd., a neighbor called 911 to report the fire but they were told that Sonoma County was responsible for Lokoya Rd. It is very true that with the numerous fires in Napa Valley resources were spread very thin. But none were assigned to our area? Just a question that needs to be clarified.

On a day-to-day NORMAL basis, your local volunteer fire company is still providing coverage to its neighbors for medical aids, traffic accidents, and fires and we will continue to do so. The unusual wind event on October 8 was not normal and we could not provide our normal duties. For that, I apologize but with an understanding that it was beyond out control.

I'd be happy to continue the conversation on a personal level if you so desire. My email is [chief16@me.com](mailto:chief16@me.com). Please contact me there and we may set up a meeting.

Volunteer Chief Gary Green

## **ANNUAL COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE** **BREAKFAST MEETING** **SUNDAY, MAY 6, 8:00-10:30**

*As a reminder, please join us for this neighborhood meeting where you can meet your neighbors, have a great pancake breakfast, hear important information from guest speakers, and plan for a Safe Fire Season! The Dry Creek-Lokoya Volunteer Fire Department and the Mt. Veeder Fire Safe Council will serve pancakes from 8:00-9:00. Shortly following there will be presentations by other organizations including:*

*Dry Creek-Lokoya Volunteer Fire Company  
Mt. Veeder Fire Safe Council  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
CalFire/Napa County Fire Department  
Home Winemakers Classic*

*Update on the Communication Issues found during the October Fires*

*Bring the entire family for pictures with the fire engines, the firefighters, and free fire hats for the kids! Literature and other important information will be available during the event for you to take home and put to good use. So, please join us at anytime between 8:00 and 10:30 at the main Dry Creek-Lokoya Volunteer Fire Department, 5900 Dry Creek Rd.*

## The Mt. Veeder Fire Safe Council Begins to Focus on Project Effectiveness

Joseph Nordlinger, MVFSC Chair

In the aftermath of the October fires that affected our area, the Mt. Veeder Fire Safe Council (MVFSC) has begun a comprehensive After Action Review of some of our completed projects to better understand their relative effectiveness against the dynamic wildland fire event that unfolded over those nine days. The MVFSC projects that we will evaluate are The Cove, Lokoya Perimeter, Old Ridge Road, Wall Road, Limited Access Road (LAR) 1 and LAR 7. The two LARs are private driveways that connect Dry Creek Road with the Old Ridge Road.

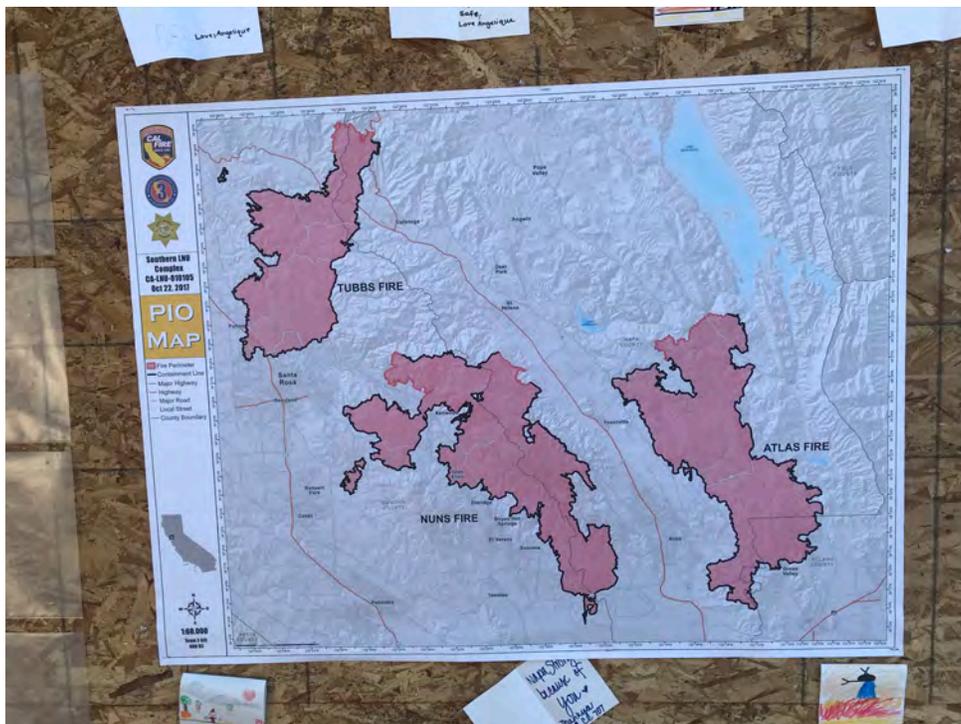
The primary objective of our shaded fuel break projects is to reduce fuel loads along roads to ensure lifesaving access and egress in the event of a wildland fire. We want to make sure that residents can escape and that first responders can get in. Of course, no fuel reduction project can anticipate all of the potential variables and circumstances of a wildland fire event and the After Action Review process will allow us to understand from an objective standpoint what worked and what didn't in order to further refine our approach.

Initial indications are that the project at the Cove was not utilized because there were no civilians at the site but the fuel break was no match for the fire. The Lokoya Perimeter fuel break did slow the fire's progress for timely egress of residents. The Old Ridge Road did dramatically slow the progress of the fire from the western slope to the eastern slope and the two Limited Access roads were very useful in both slowing the progress of the fire and providing access for key resources to combat the fire. And even though our project on Wall Road was only partially completed, it did facilitate safe egress.

It is clear that our projects had mixed outcomes, based on many variables that were specific to circumstances at the time. The fire conditions were extraordinary and resources were severely limited. As we proceed with our After Action Review, we hope to better understand what we can do differently to achieve a better outcome in the case of another fire that we hope will never happen.

Note from editor: The MVFSC meets every fourth Saturday. For more information, please visit the MVFSC website at (new website):

[www.mtveederfiresafe.com](http://www.mtveederfiresafe.com)



## MEET YOUR FIREFIGHTERS!

### THE ROBERT HAGGARD AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE GOES TO CAPTAIN BILL ROBERTSON



Volunteer fire chief Robert Haggard was well known to the community and to his firefighters as a no nonsense, honest, and upstanding citizen. After a long illness, chief haggard passed away. In his memory, we have established this award that is given annually to the firefighter that most exemplifies the traits of former Chief Robert Haggard. This year's award went to captain Bill Robertson. Captain Robertson has been with Dry Creek-Lokoya for 25 years and who worked directly with Chief Haggard. A well deserved award!

### DCL'S NAPA COUNTY FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR, FIREFIGHTER VICTOR CRUZ



The Napa County Fire Department asks each of the nine volunteer departments to select an individual that supports NCFD and the local fire company as well. This year, Firefighter Victor Cruz was selected to represent the Dry Creek-Lokoya firefighters. Victor spent long hours on the October Napa Valley fires, providing support on various DCL engines.

## The 2019 Chipping Season – Open Season on Brush!

(continued)

### HOW IT WORKS

An online form at [www.napafirewise.org](http://www.napafirewise.org) is all one needs to complete to request chipping. One may also visit a fire station to get a mail in form. Phone requests are not accepted. If you forget the link, just search 'Napa Firewise Chipping' and you'll arrive at the site. One needs to read and understand the requirements and complete the form which includes pile size and best guess as labor hours to create the pile. The information requested is important for securing funds for firewise projects via grants. Please allow up to several weeks from submitting a request before expecting a chipper visit. Requests can be submitted now through October 1st and chipping continues through the end of October.

In order to minimize driving time, chipping is scheduled using the oldest request to set the area and then other piles nearby are also chipped. Thus a chipper may appear in weeks or within days depending upon requests.

This year the capacity is doubled with two chippers and crews active chewing up brush.

### PREPARING FOR THE CHIPPER

The application form explains the requirements. Piles to be chipped must be placed along an accessible road with brush stacked butt end towards the road for ease of chipping. Do not include construction materials, poison oak or other stringy vines, or materials that may foul the chipper. It is expensive to repair a clogged chipper in addition to loss of chipping time. Charred and burnt materials will also not be chipped in consideration of staff safety.

The chipping crew supervisor may determine a pile unsafe to access or containing improper materials which will result in the pile being left unchipped. It will be tagged with explanation if this were to occur.

The chipping program is a free community service, not an entitlement, provided in cooperation between Napa County, Napa County Fire Department and Napa Communities Firewise Foundation – a non-profit organization. Help us help you by donating at [www.napafirewise.org](http://www.napafirewise.org). or mailing to NCFW, PO Box 2012, Napa, CA 94558.

Let's all work together to reduce fire risk and be firewise!

### **911 REFLECTIVE ADDRESS SIGNS**

#### **Help The Fire Department Find Your Home When Every Second Counts!**

Have you noticed all the new, green address signs in our neighborhood? Join your neighbors as seconds count in emergencies. Your local volunteer firefighters have been able to find emergencies much faster due to the 911 green signs.

Go to [mtveederfiresafe.com](http://mtveederfiresafe.com) and look for the store. You may order your address sign there.



Great for multiple addresses!



Please visit our new website for more information on the Mt Veeder Fire Safe Council. Go to:

[www.mtveederfiresafe.com](http://www.mtveederfiresafe.com)

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By Bill Robertson, MVFSC Vice-Chair

This past October we experienced a wildfire disaster the likes of which our region has never seen. The Mount Veeder neighborhood was especially hard hit, with thousands of acres of forest, dozens of homes and a life lost. For many years we have warned our community about the real possibility of a devastating fire and we have reminded people that our neighborhood is in a Very High Fire Severity Zone. Some listened and took measures to protect their homes, but many did not, either because they thought that it could never happen here or that the fire department would save their home. This past October brought the worst-case scenario. It not only happened here but in other nearby communities as well and all at the same time. The fire weather conditions of October 8<sup>th</sup> were extreme due to the excessively strong wind, low relative humidity and relatively high temperatures. As multiple fires ignited and exploded into communities, there were not enough resources available to fight the fires and there was no way to stop the fire spread with the prevailing conditions of weather, fuel and topography. Given those limitations, the priority had to be to protect life and to get people out of harm's way.

Could this happen again? To us, the answer is obvious. Yes, it could happen again and it will. As time passes

the vegetation that was consumed will grow back and people will continue to build new homes in the area. Fire season, like Christmas, comes around every year and the new vegetation will dry out and be ready to burn.

What can we as a community do now? The answer lies with you. Fire is a threat to the community itself and, as we found out, fire does not discriminate. When the Partrick Fire and the Nuns Fire merged and came over the mountain into our neighborhood, it didn't matter whether you were a prominent lawyer, an executive with a large mansion or a low-income person living in a small cabin at the end of Lokoya Road. The fire consumed everything combustible that was in its path. Can we keep this from happening again? Since it is a community problem, we as a community must come together and work together to reduce the risk. Here are some things you can do:

- 1) Take action on your own property to reduce the accumulation of dangerous fuel, not only by creating defensible space around your home but by maintaining a healthy forest. There are government programs that can assist forest landowners. If the fire moved through your property and has reduced the vegetation, then keep it that way by limiting new growth to maintain a more open landscape.
- 2) Design your home and property so that it can survive without fire department intervention by hardening your structures and landscape against embers and flames. Learn about materials and methods that can make your structure more fire-resistant. Build new houses to code or, when remodeling, bring existing houses up to California Building Code Chapter 7A requirements.
- 3) Consider whether there is sufficient separation between the house and other structures such as wood fences or outbuildings. You can create barriers against flames on your own property with retaining walls, setbacks from a slope, and adequate protection of openings.
- 4) Make sound decisions about where buildings should be located and where they shouldn't. Avoid putting structures on a vulnerable mid-slope or in a saddle or chimney. Remember, where water flows downhill in creeks, ravines and draws, fire moves uphill in the opposite direction and the heat becomes concentrated and funneled. Cal Fire and Napa County can be useful resources.
- 5) Learn about Home Ignition Zones—the areas around your home that are most vulnerable to ignition by embers or radiant heat. Learn how you can mitigate risk in those areas around your home.
- 6) If you live locally full time, if you can make the time commitment and if you meet the requirements, join the local fire company and become an active qualified member. Dry Creek-Lokoya Volunteer Fire Company, Station 16 is always looking for new recruits. Contact Chief Gary Green at (707) 738-7132.
- 7) Get involved with the Mount Veeder Fire Safe Council. Most of our completed fuel reduction projects paid off during our recent wildfire. Other projects are on the drawing board but it takes work to identify them, plan them and fund them. Many hands make lighter work. You may have knowledge, skills and abilities that can be brought to the table to help with a variety of tasks. Contact Chairperson Joseph Nordlinger at (707) 944-1562 to inquire about becoming involved.

There are many lessons to be learned from the events from this past October. Our Mt. Veeder community, along with other communities in Napa and Sonoma Counties, will undergo a lengthy healing process as our physical environment recovers and as we ourselves proceed along our path to recovery. If we don't take these hard lessons to heart and learn from them, if we don't stay diligent in our efforts to reduce wildfire risk in our community, if we don't recognize our vulnerability to wildfire, and if we don't get involved with the local organizations that strive to reduce the risks, then history is bound to repeat itself.

## [The Real Story Behind the California Wildfires](#)

If you want details of what caused our horrible fires in October, here is where you should go for the Real Story!

<http://cliffmass.blogspot.com/2017/10/the-real-story-behind-california.html?m=1>



Nuns Fire comes to the Piner's property and across the street from Chief Green's house.



And behind a neighbor's house on lower Dry Creek Rd.

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### ***THE BRIDGES IN OUR AREA***

We have many bridges that cross the creeks in our area. These bridges need to be certified by a structural engineer so that all fire engines can safely cross the bridge to provide the important emergency services. Please see the example below of a local bridge that has completed the process. This ensures that both local and visiting engines would cross your bridge.



**THE 36th ANNUAL  
HOME WINEMAKERS CLASSIC 2019  
THE ULTIMATE CULT WINE EVENT  
A BENEFIT FOR THE DRY CREEK-LOKOYA  
VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT**



**Saturday, July 27, 2019 4:00 – 6:30**

**The CIA at Copia**

**500 1<sup>st</sup> St., Napa, CA**

**Taste and Bid on rare wines handcrafted by 40 winemakers**

**Silent Auction, Hors d'ouvres by CIA, drinks**

**Tickets available: [www.drycreek-lokoya.com](http://www.drycreek-lokoya.com) or**

**[www.homewinemakersclassic.com](http://www.homewinemakersclassic.com)**

**\$50 Admission (\$45 pre-sale) - Raffle Tickets \$5.00 each**

**HOME WINEMAKERS CLASSIC**  
**JULY 27, 2019**  
**"THE ULTIMATE CULT WINE**  
**EVENT"**

Our annual fundraiser, "The Home Winemakers Classic," is taking shape. This year we will be celebrating our 36th anniversary!! We are pleased to announce that we will be returning to the CIA at Copia in downtown Napa. So come and have a GREAT time, drink some fantastic wines, eat delicious food, and bid on fantastic silent auction items while supporting your local volunteer fire department. This event has become, without a doubt, the best party for home winemakers in all of California! However, without this fund raising event, the Dry Creek-Lokoya Volunteers would not be able to support our community.

However, I must also announce that this will be the **LAST** Home Winemakers Class for the Dry Creek-Lokoya Volunteer Fire Department. I will be retiring next year and no one has stepped up to take on the work needed to organize this event. We are also short on support staff. But, this has been a **GREAT, 36 year run** with lots to be thankful for.

So, let's party like it is 1999? Go to our website to purchase tickets and to see more information:  
[www.homewinemakersclassic.com](http://www.homewinemakersclassic.com)

I must also thank the numerous individuals that have worked hundreds of hours to put on this event year-after-year with spectacular results. Could not have done this without your dedication!



**Your Local Volunteer Firefighters Do More Than Just Put Out Fires!**

While fires, both structure and vegetation, are the most noticeable and seemingly most dangerous to the most number of neighbors, you local firefighters also respond to medical emergencies (about 95% of our calls), traffic accidents, assist with water and rope rescues, and mitigate other hazards (trees and power lines down across our roads). This is why they train so often and need to have the same training as the paid county firefighters. Below are some of our trainings we must attend to stay proficient in our skills.



Auto Extrication



Entanglement Prop



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Water Rescue



Ropes Rescue



Building Entanglement Prop



Pump Operations



Wildland Fire Hose Lay



Medical



Structure Fire

### Qualifications:

- Must be at least 18 years of age.
- Must be able to read and write the English language proficiently.
- Must pass physical.
- Must be living within responding distance from station but not necessarily in the service area such as in the city limits.
- Must attend two drills a month; there is criteria for excused and un-excused drill absences.
- Must attend recruit training through a College or from Napa County.